

B2 SubC1  
4. An apparatus for electroplating as claimed in claim 2, wherein said non-oxidative atmosphere is selected from the group consisting of a rare gas atmosphere, a nitrogen gas atmosphere and a hydrogen gas atmosphere.

SubC1  
B3  
8. An apparatus for electroplating as claimed in claim 2, wherein said plating chamber includes a gas supply port for supplying said non-oxidative gas to said plating chamber and a gas evacuation port for evacuating gas contained in the plating chamber.

9. An apparatus for electroplating as claimed in claim 2, wherein said metal is a copper film, said plating chamber includes means for embedding said copper film in a groove or a connecting hole of an article to be plated in said plating bath, whereby voids formed in said copper film include an inert gas forming said non-oxidative layer, and such that said copper film may be heat treated without oxidation of said film.

B4 SubC1  
11. An apparatus for electroplating as claimed in claim 2, wherein each of said pre-treating chamber, said transportation chamber, and said electroplating chamber individually includes with an inert gas supply and a gas exhaust.

#### REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This is a full and timely response to the non-final Office Action dated November 26, 2002. Reexamination and reconsideration in light of the present amendment and the following comments are courteously requested.

By way of the present amendment, claims 1, 3, 7, and 10 are canceled. Claims 2, 4, and 8 to 9 are amended. Claim 11 is added. Thus, claims 2, 4, 8 to 9, and 11 are presently pending for the Examiner's consideration.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3 to 4, and 8 to 9 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite. Each of the points raised by the Examiner are addressed by way of the present amendment, and it is believed that the rejections are overcome.